

# AMERICORPS FY 2012 GRANTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



*This document supplements the AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity and Application Instructions: [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/nofa.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp)*

This FAQ and the competitions described are specific to AmeriCorps State and National.

## **AMERICORPS**

### **1. What is AmeriCorps?**

AmeriCorps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent federal agency whose mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

AmeriCorps is made up of three main programs: AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, and AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps).

Visit <http://www.americorps.gov/about/programs/index.asp> to find out more about the differences between these three programs.

### **2. What is AmeriCorps State and National?**

AmeriCorps State and National is a broad network of grant-funded AmeriCorps programs. It provides financial support to public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service programs around the country, including hundreds of faith- and community-based organizations, higher education institutions, Indian tribes, and public agencies. These groups recruit, train and place thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. For the remainder of this document, AmeriCorps State and National will be referred to as AmeriCorps.

### **3. What is an AmeriCorps member?**

An AmeriCorps member is an individual who is enrolled in an approved national service position and engages in intensive service to address pressing community problems. AmeriCorps members serve through nonprofits, public agencies, institutions of higher education, Indian Tribes, and faith-based organizations to tutor and mentor youth, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, run after-school programs, and help communities respond to disasters, among other activities.

AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of their term of service. Some AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance to support them during their term of service.

### **4. Is an AmeriCorps member the same as a volunteer?**

No. An AmeriCorps member is an individual serving in an approved national service position for a pre-determined term of service. AmeriCorps members are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award and might receive a living allowance and other benefits such as health insurance and childcare. Additionally, there are limitations on the types of activities in which an AmeriCorps member can engage. Volunteers are not eligible for a

Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, and typically do not receive compensation or have a pre-defined term of service. Volunteers and AmeriCorps members might serve side-by-side and AmeriCorps members often recruit and manage volunteers.

**5. Can AmeriCorps members take the place of current staff or volunteers at my organization?**

No. AmeriCorps members may not displace staff or volunteers at your organization, nor may they perform any services or duties that would supplant the hiring of employed workers.

**6. What are the living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members?**

The living allowance (stipend) requirements for AmeriCorps members vary by grant type. Detailed information on the living allowance requirements can be found in the 2012 AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity and Application Instructions.

**7. Does CNCS recruit and train the AmeriCorps members?**

No. While CNCS has an online recruitment system that AmeriCorps programs are required to utilize, each program is responsible for recruiting its own AmeriCorps members. Additionally, AmeriCorps programs are entirely responsible for training their AmeriCorps members. In your proposal you must describe how you will recruit, orient and train the AmeriCorps members you are requesting.

**8. Must an AmeriCorps member serve for a certain amount of time?**

Yes. An AmeriCorps member may serve either a full-time term of service, which requires a minimum of 1700 hours of service within a one-year period of time; or a part-time term, which can range from 300 hours to 900 hours. The AmeriCorps Notice of Funding Opportunity, or NOFO, provides additional detail. In your application, you must specify the terms of service you are proposing for your AmeriCorps members.

**9. Are there certain activities in which AmeriCorps members and staff cannot engage?**

Yes. While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or CNCS, staff and members may not engage in the following activities (see 45 CFR § 2520.65):

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;

- Providing a direct benefit to: (1) a business organized for profit; (2) a labor union; (3) a partisan political organization; (4) a nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (participating in partisan political activities or spending funds on lobbying and grassroots efforts in excess of allowable limits); and (5) an organization engaged in the religious activities described above, (unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities);
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services.

AmeriCorps members may not engage in the above activities directly or indirectly by recruiting, training, or managing others for the primary purpose of engaging in one of the activities listed above. Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-CNCS funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

## **AMERICORPS FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

### **10. What AmeriCorps funding opportunities are available?**

AmeriCorps has annual competitions for both planning and program implementation grants. Consult the AmeriCorps website for a list of upcoming competitions.

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/nofa.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp)

### **11. What is a planning grant?**

The purpose of a planning grant is to support the development or improvement of a program so that it may be better prepared to successfully compete for an AmeriCorps program implementation grant in the following grant cycle. Planning grants do not include AmeriCorps member positions. During the planning period, you will define the roles and activities members will perform in the program.

### **12. What is a program implementation grant?**

A program implementation grant provides funding to support the operation of an AmeriCorps program. Grants are typically for a three-year period, but funds are provided one year at a time, contingent upon satisfactory performance, compliance, the availability of funds, and other criteria established in the award agreement. Grants include an allocation of AmeriCorps member positions and funds for allowable program expenses such as AmeriCorps member support costs (living allowance and benefits), staffing, training, travel for program oversight, and overhead.

A grant applicant identifies a community problem, designs a program to address the problem through the service of AmeriCorps members and volunteers, and must demonstrate the capacity to administer and monitor a federal grant.

**13. Do I have to apply for a planning grant before I can apply for an AmeriCorps program grant?**

No. You may apply for an AmeriCorps program grant without having first received a planning grant. However, for organizations without AmeriCorps experience, a planning grant can be a beneficial first step.

**14. If I receive a planning grant this year, am I expected to compete for an AmeriCorps program grant the following year?**

Yes. The purpose of the planning grant is to support organizations or Indian Tribes in their development of an AmeriCorps program. Towards the end of the planning period, planning grant recipients apply and compete for an AmeriCorps program grant. There is no guarantee that planning grant recipients will receive an AmeriCorps program grant.

**15. What are the eligibility requirements?**

In general, nonprofit organizations, including faith- and other community-based organizations; institutions of higher education; government entities within states or territories; Indian Tribes; labor organizations; partnerships and consortia; and intermediaries are eligible AmeriCorps grant applicants. However, specific grant opportunities might have narrower requirements so you must review the relevant Notice of Funding Opportunity for details.

**16. Where can I find the grant application materials?**

If your proposed program will operate within one state or territory, you must contact your local Service Commission to receive the appropriate application materials and you must apply through the Commission. Do not use the application materials from the AmeriCorps website. You can find your State or Territory Service Commission's contact information here: <http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>. Each commission sets its own application due date, so it's important to contact your local commission as soon as possible.

If your proposed program will operate in more than one state or territory or you represent an Indian Tribe, the application materials can be found on the AmeriCorps website at the following link: [http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/nofa.asp](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa.asp).

Indian Tribes, whether proposing a single- or multi-state program, can apply directly to the CNCS for funding.

**17. What is a State (or Territory) Service Commission?**

A Service Commission is a governor-appointment entity responsible for administering national and community service programs in its State (or Territory). Funding for AmeriCorps programs operating within one state or territory is administered through the local service commission.

**18. What if my State (or Territory) doesn't have a service commission?**

Except for the planning grant competition, the CNCS accepts applications directly from organizations proposing to operate an AmeriCorps program within a state or territory that

doesn't have a service commission. For the 2012 grant competitions, service commissions don't exist in South Dakota, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

**19. How do I determine which funding opportunity is appropriate for me?**

For assistance in determining which AmeriCorps grant is right for your organization, you can complete the AmeriCorps Fit Finder: <http://www.americorps.gov/fitfinder/index.html>. Additionally, you may review the [Chart of AmeriCorps Grants](#) on the NOFO webpage for a brief overview of each grant type.

**20. What is the difference between a Fixed-Amount Grant and a Cost-Reimbursement grant?**

With a cost-reimbursement grant, recipients have a minimum match requirement and must maintain documentation of all grant expenses. Recipients of fixed-amount grants don't have a minimum match requirement, aren't required to maintain documentation of the match that is raised in support of the AmeriCorps program, and have fewer fiscal reporting requirements. The maximum cost per MSY for a fixed-amount grant is typically lower than for a cost-reimbursement grant. Under a cost-reimbursement grant the grantee can access and retain all funds for legitimate and allowable costs. Under a fixed-amount grant, grantees may only retain grant funds to the extent members enroll (EAP) and complete terms of service (full-time and professional corps).

**21. What are the conditions for having a Full-Time, Fixed-Amount Grant?**

A full-time, fixed-amount grant can only have full-time AmeriCorps member positions. Additionally, full-time fixed-amount grants in the education focus area must select National Performance Measures. This funding opportunity is only available to new and recompeting applicants.

**22. What is an Education Award Program grant?**

An Education Award Program (EAP) grant is a type of fixed-amount grant that receives minimal financial support from the Corporation for National and Community Service, but allows the grantee to enroll AmeriCorps members who can earn Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards. Because of the minimal financial support, EAP grants are best suited for pre-existing service programs or for organizations with other sources of funding, for whom becoming part of AmeriCorps will add value to their program. For instance, the association with AmeriCorps might allow a program to recruit more service participants, to recruit a higher caliber of service participants, or serve more beneficiaries.

**23. What is the difference between a Professional Corps grant and other AmeriCorps grants?**

The two primary differences are that Professional Corps grants do not include AmeriCorps member living allowances and benefits, and that there is no limit to the amount Professional Corps AmeriCorps members can be compensated for their service. Covering the expense of the AmeriCorps members' living allowance and benefits are the grantee's responsibility.

## **FUNDING PRIORITIES AND SELECTION CRITERIA**

**24. What are the funding priorities for AmeriCorps?**

CNCS seeks to target its AmeriCorps grantmaking in the Education, Disaster, and Veterans and Military Families Focus Areas, with a particular interest on programs proposing to use the CNCS-developed National Performance Measures. To maximize the impact of the investment in national service, CNCS is seeking to fund programs that can demonstrate community impact and solve community problems through an evidence-based approach (e.g. performance data, research, theory of change). Details on the priorities for a particular grant competition can be found in the relevant NOFO.

**25. Are there targeted percentages of funding for each priority area?**

No. CNCS has not pre-determined how much funding will be allocated by priority area.

**26. Will my program receive more priority for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure?**

No additional preference is given for selecting more than one Focus Area and/or more than one National Performance Measure.

**27. Will CNCS eventually stop funding programs that aren't represented in the Focus Areas or the National Performance Measures?**

CNCS' Focus Areas were delineated in the 2009 Serve America Act and are unlikely to change in the near future. The 2012 National Performance Measures reflect updated thinking on Agency-wide priorities and telling the story of where national service can make the greatest impact. These Agency-wide Priority Measures provide a focused set of outcomes for programs and initiatives across CNCS, they drive accountability, and take achievability into consideration. Our performance measurement framework is iterative and we plan to refine and update the Measures as we learn from the data we receive. We will regularly assess our priorities in light of local and national needs.

**28. What does evidence-basis mean and what documentation is required?**

Evidence-basis refers to a program's demonstration of why it is proposing a particular intervention to address an identified community problem. Evidence for the intervention could include results from research, performance data, or results from a similar, successful program and would provide the basis for decisions about the design, frequency and intensity of the proposed intervention. For example: An applicant proposes to engage AmeriCorps members to recruit and manage volunteers. The volunteers will tutor third-grade students in a low-performing school for an hour a day, three days per week. The proposal indicates that as a result, the students' academic performance will improve. The applicant must describe in its proposal the 'evidence' that the design of the intervention (a certain set of tutoring activities delivered for one hour three times per week) will result in improved academic performance.

**29. What other type of evidence is required in my proposal?**

In your proposal you must provide evidence of the need, which refers to data that demonstrates the extent or severity of the need in the target community.

**30. What is a theory of change?**

A theory of change is a theory (or hypothesis) for how an intervention can address or solve a stated problem. A theory of change articulates a problem, a proposed intervention, and the change (outcomes) that is expected to result from delivering the intervention. Underlying the theory is a set of assumptions, supported by evidence, about why the intervention is likely to lead to the outcomes.

## **THE GRANT APPLICATION**

**31. Is there a limit on the amount of grant funds I may request?**

The maximum funding that will be awarded to a planning grant is \$50,000.

There is no pre-determined limit on the amount of grant funds that you may request for a program implementation grant. However, your level of requested funding should make sense for your proposed program design, desired impact, and the capacity of your organization. Additionally, you should keep in mind the total amount of funds available and the maximum Cost per MSY for your competition. The general practice is to not award more than 50 member positions to new grantees.

**32. What does Cost per MSY mean?**

Cost per MSY stands for Cost per Member Service Year and represents the cost to CNCS of your AmeriCorps program. One MSY is the equivalent of one full-time term of service (1700 member service hours). You calculate your cost per MSY by dividing the total amount of CNCS funds requested by the total number of MSYs requested. For example, if your application requests \$10,000 in CNCS funds and 10 MSYs, then your cost per MSY is \$1,000. The cost per MSY does not include child care or the cost of the Segal Education Award a member may earn. Cost per MSY is not applicable for planning grants.

**33. Is there a maximum Cost per MSY?**

Yes. The maximum cost per MSY varies by grant program and is detailed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

**34. Can we use this grant to pay for general organizational expenses?**

No. AmeriCorps grants are only for costs directly related to the proposed project, rather than general organizational expenses. Fundraising costs, including raising funds to meet your AmeriCorps grant matching costs, are considered general organizational expenses and cannot be paid with grant funds. However, to a limited degree, you may capture indirect administrative costs related to your AmeriCorps program. The application instructions provide guidance on charging administrative costs to the grant.

**35. Will I have to contribute matching funds?**

Yes. The money awarded as part of an AmeriCorps grant does not cover the full cost of running an AmeriCorps program. Cost reimbursement grants have a required minimum match and match documentation must be maintained. Fixed-amount grants do not have a specified minimum match requirement, but the amount provided by the Corporation does not cover the full cost of operating a program. The match requirements are described in the NOFO.

In light of Executive Order 13175 (November 6, 2000) on “Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments,” the Corporation will consider requests for waivers of match requirements from Indian Tribes in an expedited manner. Please review the NOFO for information explaining how to submit a match waiver request.

**36. How many AmeriCorps members will my program receive?**

In your proposal you must indicate the number and type of AmeriCorps member positions you are requesting based on your program design and desired outcomes. If your proposal is approved for funding, CNCS will determine how many AmeriCorps members will be included in your award.

**37. What are the AmeriCorps member health insurance requirements?**

The member health insurance requirements are outlined annually in the grant provisions that are incorporated into the Notice of Grant Award. As a point of reference, the requirements for 2011 were that the coverage provided by the grantee provides the following minimum benefits:

- Physician services for illness or injury
- Hospital room and board
- Emergency room
- X-ray and laboratory
- Prescription drugs
- Limited mental/nervous disorders
- Limited substance abuse coverage
- An annual deductible of no more than \$250 charges per member
- No more than \$1,000 total annual out-of-pocket per member
- A 20% co-pay or a comparable fixed fee with the exception of a 50% co-pay for mental and substance abuse care
- A maximum benefit of at least \$50,000 per occurrence or cause

Grantees must provide, or make available, healthcare insurance to those members serving a 1700-hour full-time term who are not otherwise covered by a healthcare policy at the time each begins his/her term of service, except for EAPs, Professional Corps, or members covered under a collective bargaining agreement.

**38. How long is the grant period?**

AmeriCorps program implementation grants typically have a three-year period, but funds are provided one year at a time. Continued funding during the course of the three years is contingent upon satisfactory performance, compliance, the availability of funds, and other criteria established in the award agreement.

Planning grants have a one-year grant period.

**39. What is an operating site?**

An operating site is the organization that manages the AmeriCorps program on behalf of the multi-state recipient of the grant from CNCS. A multi-state grantee typically has an operating site in each state in which it has AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members may be placed at the operating site, or an operating site may place AmeriCorps members at multiple member service sites.

**40. What is a member service site?**

A member service site is the location at which an AmeriCorps member is placed to provide his/her service to the community.

**41. Can I operate a single-state program in the first year, while I develop a multi-state partnership?**

Not if you are funded for a multi-state grant. If you wish to operate a program in a single state, you must request AmeriCorps funding through the State Service Commission in your state.

## **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

**42. What are AmeriCorps' performance measurement requirements?**

AmeriCorps programs must have an aligned output and outcome that reflects the program's primary service activity.

**43. What are National Performance Measures?**

CNCS has established six Focus Areas: Disaster Services, Economic Opportunity, Education, Environmental Stewardship, Healthy Futures, and Veterans and Military Families based on the priorities included in the Serve America Act. Within these Focus Areas, as well as for Capacity Building, CNCS has created National Performance Measures in order to aggregate the results of similar programs and demonstrate the impact across our agency programs and initiatives. Applicants choosing to report on the National Performance Measures also will receive priority funding consideration. See the NOFO document for specifics on our funding priorities.

**44. What is the difference between Priority Measures and Pilot Measures?**

Our National Performance Measures are split into two groups: Priority Measures and Pilot Measures.

- Priority Measures are a subset of the original National Performance Measures Pilot (2011) with the addition of Capacity Building Measures.
- Pilot Measures are the remaining measures from the National Performance Measures Pilot (2011) with the addition of Capacity Building Measures not included in the Priority Measures.

**45. How did CNCS decide which grant activities wouldn't be represented in the National Measures?**

CNCS leadership from across the agency reviewed the goals and priorities in our 2011-2015 Strategic Plan and focused our work on a limited set of Priority Measures. To get there we considered:

- Are the measures specific, measureable, achievable and result-oriented?
- Will they provide useful information to guide decision making?
- Do they align with previous investments that have demonstrated effectiveness?
- Can they collectively tell a compelling story about the value of national service and other CNCS resources?

**46. What is an "applicant-determined" performance measure?**

An "applicant-determined" performance measure is one in which the applicant identifies the outputs and outcomes that will be measured, based on its primary service activity. This is different from the National Performance Measures, where CNCS pre-determines common outputs and outcomes with specific definitions and data collection methods that applicants must use.

**47. If I select National Performance Measures this year, will I maintain the same measures next year?**

Yes. It is best to keep measures consistent over the life of a three-year grant so that progress can be measured over time. However, in the initial years of the National Performance Measures, it is possible that some measures, definitions and guidance may change.

**48. Are National Performance Measures required?**

Priority Measures, a sub-set of the National Performance Measures, are required for new and recompetiting programs whose proposed program fits those measures. Additionally, Education National Performance Measures are required for Full-Time Fixed-Amount applicants in the Education Focus Area. Otherwise, the use of National Performance Measures is strongly encouraged and is a funding priority, but is not required.

**49. Should formula programs use the National Performance Measures?**

CNCS would like all AmeriCorps programs to use National Performance Measures when they fit their program activities. While the national performance measures are not required for formula programs, State Service Commissions are strongly encouraged to use the national performance measures for their formula programs.

**50. We are in a continuation year of our grant. Should we select National Performance Measures?**

In general, no Performance measures should be consistent over the life of a three-year grant cycle so that progress can be measured over time. If a grantee's current measures are not serving the program well and the grantee would prefer to select National Performance Measures, the grantee may consult with its Program Officer.

**51. Are National Performance Measures required for planning grants?**

National Performance Measures are not required for planning grants. However, the funding priority of planning grants is based on whether the applicant is proposing to address outcomes identified in the National Performance Measures.

**52. How do I decide if my program should select National Performance Measures?**

If the National Performance Measures align with your program's activities, then CNCS strongly encourages your participation. The [National Performance Measures Instructions](#) provide definitions; requirements and guidelines that will help you determine which are right for you. These instructions can be found on the NOFO webpage.

**53. What are the requirements regarding performance measurement for Fixed-Amount Grants in the Education Focus Area?**

Applicants for a Fixed-Amount Grant in the Education Focus Area are required to select Education National Performance Measures.

**54. If I select National Performance Measures, will I also have to create “applicant-determined” performance measures?**

There are two circumstances in which your program will need to create applicant-determined performance measures in addition to the National Performance Measures. First, if your program selects National Performance Measures for activities that do not represent your primary service category, then your program will also have to provide an aligned set of applicant-determined performance measures for your primary service activity because AmeriCorps regulations stipulate that a program must have an aligned set of performance measures that represent its primary service activity. Second, if you select a National Performance Measure that does not have its own aligned outcome, you will need to create an applicant-determine outcome to complete the alignment. The need to create an aligned applicant-determined outcome measure is clearly stated in the [National Performance Measures Instructions](#).

**55. What is an aligned performance measure?**

An aligned performance measure is an output paired with an outcome. Most of our National Performance Measures include aligned measures, but in some cases you may need to create your own aligned applicant-determined outcome measure.

**56. Does the aligned set of measures I select need to include an output, an intermediate outcome and an end outcome?**

No. You are required to select an aligned output and outcome. Whether the outcome is an intermediate or end outcome will depend on your program model. Outcomes must be measurable during the grant period.

**57. How many performance measures should I propose?**

Each program should have at least one aligned measure (composed of an output and an outcome) reflecting its primary service activity. Performance measures reflecting non-primary activities should not be included in your application and will not be reported to CNCS, although you might still collect the data for your own purposes.

**58. Are member development and volunteer generation performance measures required?**

Member development and volunteer generation are required components of all AmeriCorps programs, but performance measures for these activities should only be included in your application if this is the primary focus of your program. Programs that focus on member development should review the member-focused Economic Opportunity Pilot Measures to see if they are applicable. Programs that focus on volunteer generation can select the Capacity Building volunteer generation Priority Measures. It is also important to note that all programs need to report on volunteers generated in their progress report.

**59. When I last applied for funding, why did AmeriCorps ask me to remove some of my performance measures from my grant application?**

Applicants were asked to remove from their applications performance measures that didn't reflect the primary service activities of the program, and that didn't need to be reported to CNCS. However, this wasn't an indication that these activities were not worthwhile. In many instances, the program would want to measure these activities and track the results to ensure program quality even though they aren't reflected in the approved AmeriCorps application.

**60. If I select National Performance Measures, are there specific outputs and outcomes I am required to use?**

Yes, in most cases. Please read the [National Performance Measures Instructions](#) carefully for the selection requirements.

**61. Where do I report on Capacity Building activities?**

In eGrants, select Goal 3 Capacity Building Measures and read the Performance Measures Instructions carefully about paired outputs and outcomes.

**62. What programs can select the Teacher Corps Measures in the Education Focus Area?**

These Measures are intended to be used by AmeriCorps programs where the AmeriCorps members serve as the primary teacher in a classroom setting during their terms of service. The AmeriCorps members may serve in public, charter, or private schools to address a critical shortage of teaching professionals in a high needs area or school.

**63. Can I count AmeriCorps Members as beneficiaries of service if my program selects National Performance Measures?**

Most of the National Performance Measures are NOT designed to capture the impact the program may have on the AmeriCorps members. There are specific Teacher Corps measures in the Education Focus Area, and certain Measures in the Economic Opportunity and Veterans and Military Families Focus Areas where AmeriCorps members are either the sole focus or may be included in the count of people served. Programs may count AmeriCorps members as beneficiaries of the services if the members receive the services as a member of the general public (or target population) rather than as part of their AmeriCorps service or training.

**64. Do the AmeriCorps members in my program have to be directly providing the service counted in the National Performance Measures?**

The National Performance Measures selected by an AmeriCorps program should reflect the expected result of the AmeriCorps program activities. The AmeriCorps members do not have to interact directly with the beneficiaries of the service, but they must provide direct support that makes the program's results possible. One exception is when the AmeriCorps members are providing organizations with capacity building services, which can be reported on in Goal 3 in eGrants.

**65. Can I count the same people in more than one National Performance Measure output?**

Read the Performance Measures Instructions carefully. Unless otherwise specified, the same individuals may be counted more than once across different Measures for different services they may be receiving. However, programs cannot count the same individual more than once **within** any one specific National Performance Measure. For example, if you helped the same individual both prepare for a disaster and then respond to a disaster, you may count that individual in both DS1 and DS2. .

**66. How do I indicate that I am selecting National Performance Measures?**

Programs will select Focus Areas and National Performance Measures in the eGrants performance measure screens at the time of application. In addition, the Focus Areas, National Performance Measures, and proposed targets should be referenced in the narrative discussion of outputs and outcomes.

**67. Am I allowed to allocate funds for collecting and analyzing data? If so, how much?**

Costs related to measuring the performance of a program are allowable grant expenses. There is no standard recommended amount. As with all cost reimbursement grants, these costs must be reasonable, allowable for the proposed program, and properly allocated across grant activities.

**68. One of our program's primary funders requires us to report on a performance measure that is similar to one of your National Performance Measures, but slightly different.**

**Can I just report on that measure instead?**

No. If the program chooses to select National Performance Measures, it will need to report to CNCS on the Measure as it is defined.

**69. What are the reporting requirements if I am using National Performance Measures?**

National Grantees and State Commissions with sub-grantees that are participating in the National Performance Measures will submit two progress reports each year on the first Monday in May and the first Monday in December. Further information on the reporting requirements is contained in the grant provisions that will be incorporated into your grant award.

**70. How should we report outcomes across grant years? For example, if a service is delivered toward the end of the grant year, the outcome might not be counted until the following year. How do we show these outcomes in eGrants?**

In situations like the one described above, grantees may report outcomes in a subsequent grant year and should adjust their targets in consultation with their Program Officer.

**71. Why does CNCS require applicants to provide information on the proportion of Member Service Years (MSYs) devoted to each Focus Area?**

The Focus areas created in the Serve America Act create the expectation that CNCS will be able to report resources allocated by Focus area. Because many applicants direct their activities to more than one Focus Area, it is important for CNCS to collect expected MSYs devoted to each Focus Area.

**72. How should I determine the MSY percentages for each Focus area?**

A program requests a certain number of MSYs in order to meet particular needs in their community. Programs determine what needs are addressed by members serving in that Focus Area and assign the MSYs accordingly.

**73. Is my program expected to monitor member time to ensure that it corresponds to what is entered into the MSY charts for the Focus Areas?**

Grant applicants will enter MSYs into the MSY charts according to the distribution of time that members are expected to engage in each Focus Area. At the end of the grant year, grantees will report on how the members actually spent their time. CNCS expects the MSY amounts entered at the time of application and in the grantee progress report to be very close unless the program received permission to change the activities causing change in the proportion of time devoted to each Focus Area.

***Sampling***

**74. Under what circumstances is it ok for grantees to use sampling?**

In performance measurement, sampling presents a tradeoff because it does not allow us to count all of the individuals who demonstrated the desired change (outcome) we are trying to measure. Methodologically speaking, sampling is appropriate as long as the grantee has a solid plan for ensuring that its sample will be representative. Practically speaking, we would want grantees to use sampling only when they are able to make the case that it is unrealistic to collect data from the whole population.

**75. When would CNCS not allow sampling?**

CNCS will not allow sampling when it is reasonable to expect a grantee to collect data from the whole population. CNCS will also not allow sampling if the grantee's sampling frame is not sufficient or if the grantee's methodology will not result in a representative sample.

**76. How does a grantee set targets and outputs when it is planning to sample?**

In most cases the grantee should be able to set targets based on the population as a whole. If a grantee's sampling methodology is sound and results in a representative sample, then the program can extrapolate their results to report on an outcome for the population as a whole.

For example, a program reports an output of 1000 children served. The program selects a representative sample of 200 children. Of these, 180 students (90%) demonstrate the desired change. In this case, the program could report an extrapolated outcome of 900 students.

**77. If an existing program has not been sampling, can it switch to sampling now?**

We want grantees to use sampling only when they are able to make the case that it is unrealistic to collect data from the whole population. If a program is currently collecting data from the whole population, they would need to make a compelling case for why they can no longer do so.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

**78. What documents do I need to read in order to apply for funding?**

You must read the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the Application Instructions for the competition you are interested in. The AmeriCorps Regulations, 45 C.F.R. §§ 2520 - 2550 is also an important reference to understand the requirements of AmeriCorps programs. If you are considering National Performance Measures, you must read the appropriate National Performance Measures instructions.

**79. When must I contact the State Service Commission?**

If your organization is not an Indian Tribe and the program you wish to operate is located in one state, you must contact your State Service Commission to find out how to apply for an AmeriCorps grant.

If your organization plans to operate an AmeriCorps program in two or more states, you must consult and coordinate activities with the State Service Commission in each state where activities will take place. The consultation is designed to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and lead to enhanced coordination among grantees. You must describe the consultation in your application.

The 2012 AmeriCorps Notices of Funding Opportunity describe the consultation requirements in more detail.

You can find your State Commission's contact information here:

<http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>

**80. Are Indian Tribes required to consult with state commissions?**

Indian Tribes are not required to consult with state commissions. However, to ensure the most effective use of national service resources and enhance coordination among grantees, Indian Tribes are encouraged to do so. While the NOFO encourages tribal grant applicants to "consult" with the State Commission of each state in which the organization plans to operate an AmeriCorps program prior to application submission, the term "consult" is used in the generic sense. It does not refer to formal government-to-government consultation, which is generally between tribal governments and the federal government, or between tribal governments and those state governments that have formal tribal consultation policies in place.

**81. Are we required to submit our application via the on-line eGrants system?**

CNCS requires that all applicants are required utilize CNCS' web-based application system, eGrants, to submit applications electronically. The Notices of Funding Opportunity and the Application Instructions contain detailed submission instructions in the event that you are unable to submit via eGrants.

**82. When are applications due?**

Deadlines for applications to be submitted to CNCS are contained in the NOFO.

If you are applying for a single-state AmeriCorps program, you must contact your local State or Territory Service Commission for the application materials, process and deadline:

<http://www.americorps.gov/about/contact/statecommission.asp>

## **OTHER QUESTIONS**

**83. What if I have questions that are not answered by this document?**

You are invited to participate in one of the technical assistance conference calls scheduled each month from September 2011 – January 2012. The schedule can be found at:

[http://www.americorps.gov/for\\_organizations/funding/nofa\\_detail.asp?tbl\\_nofa\\_id=84#TTA](http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/funding/nofa_detail.asp?tbl_nofa_id=84#TTA).

You may register for the calls or contact us with any questions at [americorpsgrants@cns.gov](mailto:americorpsgrants@cns.gov) or 202.606.7508.

**84. How do I ensure that I'm aware of any changes or new information?**

If you are considering applying as a direct applicant to CNCS, send an email to

[AmeriCorpsgrants@cns.gov](mailto:AmeriCorpsgrants@cns.gov) with your organization name, a point of contact, your email address, and the competition you are interested in. You may also subscribe to the RSS feed on the NOFO website and follow us on Twitter: @GROW\_AmeriCorps.